



Grow Group Guide | zoom 1

The content of this week's bible discussion is taken from a discussion guide published by Saddleback Church in California and reflects their response to COVID-19.

Housekeeping

There will likely be a few kinks to be worked out in this first week of Zoom calls. Be prepared for this, have patience, and do what you can to get everyone online and start relatively on time.

Make sure your group is aware of the Sunday morning live-stream and understands how to access it. Take note of who had issues this past Sunday, and be prepared to help them find a way to troubleshoot.

Icebreakers

Did you stock up on toilet paper? What is your theory for why so many people were stocking up and hoarding tons of toilet paper?

When life seems out of control people can do some crazy things. What's the funniest thing you remember hearing about, seeing, or doing in such a time?

Bible Discussion

As a church family, we are uniquely equipped to be of service during times of crisis or emergency. Do our own views of this current crisis allow us to embrace our unique opportunity as a church?

Read: Psalm 23: 1-4

What do God's promises in Psalm 23 verses 1 and 4 mean to you? Pray as a group that God will use each of you to offer comfort to others around you.

Read Proverbs 14:15

In what ways are you practicing discernment as you engage with media?

Read Isaiah 43:2

After reading this scripture, what assurances or promises do we have that God will go through this crisis with us?

The world's approach to solving this crisis changes by the hour. Men think they have control but ultimately, we know it is God who is in control. In what ways are you leaning on God in this changing time?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 14

Because we live with hope in the midst of pain, what are some steps you can take now to improve your outlook? Every need in our world is an open door and God wants to use you to help others. How is God calling you to open a door this week by serving your community or someone in need?

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Read Galatians 6:2

Share about a time when God got you through something that was overwhelming or scary. How can you use this experience to help others overcome their fears or challenges during this time of crisis?

Go Deeper (optional)

Not everyone is at equal risk for the coronavirus: the most vulnerable people are those over 60 with a pre-existing condition that weakens their immunity, such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, or upper respiratory problems. What are some ways you can help someone in this demographic? Come up with some next steps as a group.

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

Use your wisdom to lead a prayer time in a way that allows for growth opportunities. After collecting prayer requests, give the group a chance to pray for each of the requests, and *after* they have prayed, be sure to pray for the requests yet prayed for.



Grow Group Guide | zoom 2

Housekeeping

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Bible Discussion

Theme: Faith brings even its doubts to Jesus.

Read

Mark 9:14–22 - Problem 1: Demons

Mark 9:23-27 - Problem 2: Unbelief

Mark 9:28-29 - Problem 3: Prayerlessness

Understand

- What is the attack strategy of the demon upon the boy? Why does the father ask if Jesus could have compassion on “us”—not only on the boy, but on the father as well?
- How does the tragedy of demon possession turn out for good in driving this father to Jesus?
- In what way does this victory over the demon show the authority and power of Jesus?
- Why does Mark talk about the boy looking dead and then being raised up? Why share those details?
- Why doesn't the passage end with the casting out of the demon—why return to the question of the disciples' inability and need for prayer? How does this theme fit with Mark's wider theme of the failure of the disciples and what they really need?

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Apply

- Evaluate your own prayer life. Does pride keep you away from prayer?
- In what areas do you struggle with pain, doubt, confusion, or even cynicism? Can you share those areas with your small group or someone else? If you can share them with others, can you bring them to Jesus?
- Are there examples in your life where desperation has driven you to Jesus? Share some of those examples. Are there examples now of things you need to bring to Jesus? What is keeping you from bringing those things to Jesus and crying out to him?
- What can you take away from this message and share with others in your life?

Go Deeper (optional)

What can your group do this week to serve in the name of Jesus? Who can you help? What are some things you may be scared to do, but feel God calling you to nonetheless?

Prayer (15-20 Minutes)

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Grow Group Guide | zoom 3

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Bible Discussion

Read Mark 11:1-11

Read Zechariah 9:9. How does Mark 11:1-11 fulfill this prophecy.

What was the significance of the colt that Jesus requested His disciples to go and get in the village?

What kind of king did the people want? What kind of king do you (or others you know) want or expect Jesus to be? Some examples:

"Therapist King": Jesus is there to make me feel better, not challenge me.

"Wal-Mart King": Jesus gives me what I want at the lowest cost.

"Religious King": Jesus is my example for moral goodness. If I am good enough I will be saved.

In our lives as Christians it is important for us to understand that our own sin is our greatest problem, not our circumstance and not other people. Jesus didn't come to change the circumstance that the Jewish people faced (Roman oppression) but rather he came to cleanse them and forgive their sins.

How is this truth still so relevant to us today? In what ways do you spend your time blaming your circumstances or blaming others rather than looking at your own sin?

How can you and I today continually make sure that what we think and/or believe about Jesus is actually consistent with who He really is?

Notice the things that the people say in verses 9 & 10. Why is this significant?

With the knowledge that Jesus was going to totally go against His own people's nationalistic dreams for Him and their nation, how would you characterize Jesus' intentional and deliberate courage in entering Jerusalem boldly and going to the temple when He could have done this in secrecy?

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's discussion? In what ways might God be calling you to change your life or your way of thinking?

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Go Deeper (optional)

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Grow Group Guide | zoom 3

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 11:1-11

The Triumphal Entry

11 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus[a] sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" 4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. 7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. 9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

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Grow Group Guide | zoom 4

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 16:1-8

- What are Mary Magdalene and Salome discussing in verse 3? Based on their actions up to this point, is there any indication they believe Jesus might not be in the tomb? Why or why not?

Jesus had predicted His own resurrection many times. His followers knew these predictions well. (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 27:62-64) Yet the women were still approaching the tomb as though He would be in it.

- Are there any promises God has made to you in which you lack confidence or faith or that just sound too good to be true? Are there any areas of your life that reflect unbelief in what God has said He will do?

Even in their unbelief that He would resurrect from the dead, Mary Magdalene and Salome were faithful to love and worship Jesus, bringing spices they had bought to anoint Him, unfazed by the challenges of entering a possibly closed tomb. They were the last at the crucifixion and the first at the tomb. Because they showed up, they discovered He had been telling the truth all along. They became believers in the resurrection when they met the man in white.

- What does it look like for you to love Jesus and to worship Him in spite of your unbelief, in spite of your uncertainty? What does it look like for you to continue “showing up,” even when you are disappointed that things haven’t turned out the way you hoped?
- Could you describe a moment in your life when God met you in your weakness and unbelief and showed you who He really is? Were you terrified, as the women were? How did you respond?
- What is the first command given to the women upon seeing that Jesus has risen? What might we learn from this command today?
- Why does the man in white refer to, “His disciples and Peter,” rather than simply, “His disciples?” Don’t forget that Peter is chronicling the life of Jesus to Mark.

Go Deeper

Read Luke 24:13-35

- Cleopas and the other disciple were followers of Jesus, yet they did not recognize him. Why does this matter? Is this relatable? Have you ever been so consumed with what you thought you knew to be true that you couldn’t see Jesus working right in front of you?
- Based on what these men said about Jesus and the things that had happened in Jerusalem, what do they believe about Jesus? Why were they so hopeless? How do we cope with disappointment when God doesn’t act or deliver the way we thought or hoped he would?
- Why do you think Jesus takes the time to re-explain the scriptures to these men instead of just revealing who He was? Why did he choose to reveal himself when he did?

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- The Emmaus Road experience gives us insight into how we can develop a “good kind of heartburn.” From looking at these two disciples and their time with Jesus, how do you relate to their experience?
- How are you doing with your own understanding of the Bible? Are there some things about the Christian faith that are a mystery to you? How might you begin to approach Scripture with the expectation that Jesus will reveal himself to you?



Grow Group Guide | zoom 5

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 14:26-31; Mark 14:66-72

- Why did Peter think he would never deny Jesus? Why was denying Jesus unfathomable to Peter? Why might it be dangerous for us to think that we are incapable of denying Jesus?
- Jesus warns Peter that he will deny Him three times. Does Peter have *any* chance of not denying him? What do our conclusions here tell us about ourselves, Jesus, and our relationship with Him?
- Peter's denial was loud and outright, but it was rooted in pride and fear. What does it look like when we deny Jesus today? Lets really think through this: how might we be denying Jesus today in more passive, subtle ways? How is this denial destructive to us, and how is our denial destructive to others?
- What kind of questions did the servant girl and bystanders ask Peter? Were they malicious or condemning in nature, or more objective? Does anything they say to Peter indicate malintent? What *could* have happened had Peter embraced their questions with honesty and a bolder faith? *Feel free to check out the dialogue in the other three gospels: Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-17, 25-27*
- How do we respond when we realize we have denied Jesus and lost an opportunity to share his love?

Go Deeper

Read John 21:15-17

- Often hidden in English translations are the different Greek words used for "love.". Agape love means a devoted love, while phileo love refers to social love: "You love me" versus "I love you." Peter used 'friendly' or 'social' phileo love each time he replied to Jesus. Jesus, however, used agape love the first two times, and phileo the third time. Why was Peter so hurt/grieved when Jesus asked the third time?
- Why does Jesus tell Peter to feed and tend His sheep each time Peter answers? Does the extent to which we have proven our faith (or lack of) reflect how Jesus can or plans to use us?
- What do you find the most encouraging about the way Jesus restores Peter? Has there been a time in your life when you have felt restored by God after abandoning him?



Grow Group Guide | zoom 6

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 9:33-37

- On the way to Capernaum, the disciples argued about who was “greatest.” What might have started this argument? Why might they have been unwilling to admit to Jesus what they were arguing about?
- Arguing over greatness points toward the disciples being at least somewhat consumed by the issue. Why might they have been consumed by a desire to be great? Does their arguing remind you of conversations in your own life?
- How do we often find ourselves absorbed by trying to be great? What are some “side effects” of chasing something that we think will make us great?
- God’s kingdom is a reverse kingdom, such that we are often called to do things quite differently than our nature may guide us, or how the world may direct us. How is this apparent here? What does Jesus say is needed to be great?
- Is wanting to be “great” or “first” necessarily wrong? (for example, what would be the opposite of pursuing greatness? Would this be a good pursuit?) In what ways have you seen God redirect your desire to be great? Or what ways might God currently be redirecting your desires for greatness?
- The key to being great is to be a “servant of all”–to make yourself greater by giving more of yourself away to others. How does this clash with how the world thinks we can become great?
- Being a servant of all describes someone who serves willingly. How do you serve others willingly? What do you have that you could use for the sake of serving others?
- In church circles the attribute/term “servant’s heart” is often used to describe some people. How would you describe a person who has a “servant’s heart”?
- <At SHBC we’re often say, remind ourselves, and looking for ways to “Start with Love.” Does starting with love reflect what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples here? How does Jesus start with love here? What are some practical ways we (as a church, a grow group, family, individuals) can seek to both serve willingly, and start with love?>
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Go Deeper

Read Matthew 18:1-4

- What does it mean to humble oneself like a child? In what ways are children often more humble than adults? Take some time to brainstorm examples of why childlike humility and childlike faith are advantageous in God’s kingdom.

- Why is humility essential for God's children? What is the opposite of humility? How does this stunt a believer's growth?
- What do you need to change this week to help you become more humble in the eyes of God?



Grow Group Guide | zoom 7

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 9:42-50

- Have you ever had a serious conversation with someone about hell? If so, what did you discuss? If not, why do you think this is something you've never talked about before? How does modern America view hell? How is that view different from Jesus's view of hell?
- A millstone is a very large stone weighing hundreds of pounds typically used to grind grain into flour. Jesus used a graphic illustration about drowning in the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around your neck. What did He say drowning this way would be better than doing (v. 42)?
- Who is Jesus referring to when He says "these little ones"? Is it just small children? Who else is included here? Why is the penalty of causing such people to sin so severe? Is causing one of them to sin or disbelieve worse than our own sins or disbelief?
- Jesus uses the hand, foot, and eye as illustrations for things that cause you to sin. What's the point Jesus is making here? Is Jesus using hyperbole? What does He imply you should do with those things that cause you to sin? Why should a person deal with sin in such a radical way? Consider exploring Deuteronomy 31:17-18, Isaiah 59:2, and Micah 3:4.
- In the first two of three illustrations, Jesus said it is better to enter life maimed (v. 43) or lame (v. 45). What is the "life" He is referring to? See the third illustration (v. 47).
- Jesus describes hell as a place where "the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." What does this say about hell?
- In Christian circles, sometimes you might encounter people who emphasize a "hellfire and brimstone" gospel, and other times you might encounter people who emphasize a "love only" gospel. What do we lose if we preach love without the reality of hell, or hell without the importance of love?
- Read Matthew 5:13. What does it mean to have salt in ourselves and be the "salt of the earth"?

Go Deeper

- Has what you've learned from the Bible about hell factored into your understanding of the character of God? How can this understanding help strengthen your relationship with God and your adoration of His attributes?
- Has your understanding of hell factored into your understanding of the just nature of God's forgiveness? How can this reignite your thanksgiving for such a great salvation? How can this reignite a sense of urgency to reach the lost?
- What can you take from this message and share with others in your life?



Grow Group Guide | zoom 8

Bible Discussion

Read Matthew 15:21-28

- Why did Matthew emphasize that the woman was from Canaan? Why is it more important for Matthew's readers (and us) to know she is a Canaanite than to know her name or any other information about her?
- The woman was begging and pleading with Jesus to help her daughter, but He didn't answer her at first. Then the disciples asked Jesus to make her go away. Why didn't Jesus answer the woman and her plea? Why did the disciples have to say something to Him? Did Jesus even answer the disciples in a direct and relevant way?
- How did this woman's approach and interaction with Jesus differ from how the Pharisees interacted with Jesus?
- In her reply to Jesus (v. 27) the woman indicates crumbs would be sufficient for her. What does the woman's plea for even crumbs point toward about her faith? What does this reflect about her belief in the power of God? Do we have the same faith?
- The woman was humble and persistent in begging for Jesus to help her daughter. Have we ever behaved similarly? Do we cry out to God for others in our lives? Take a moment to think about and share when you've cried out to God for others and how you've seen Him respond. Are there moments where you should have, but didn't cry out to God for others?
- What sort of excuses could the woman have made to justify abandoning her pursuit in the buildup to verse 27? What can we learn from her persistence?
- The woman was satisfied with crumbs. What can or do "crumbs" represent for us today? Are we satisfied with crumbs? Do we ask for crumbs, or for things bigger/greater than crumbs?
- What is significant about how Jesus heals the woman's daughter? How does this fit in the context of other healings by Jesus? Is this kind of healing relevant to us today?
- What are some characteristics of this woman that we should seek to imitate?

Go Deeper

Read Galatians 3:26-29

- What do these verses point to as the most critical thing for us and our relationship with God?
- In verse 27 it states that we (i.e., those of us "baptized into Christ") are to be "clothed with Christ." What does this mean?
- Are there divisions or distinctions between believers? Are there different status rankings, or inheritances some might receive that others won't? Why does this matter? Why is this important?



Grow Group Guide | zoom 10

On Sunday, Pastor Ted presented five big “life lessons” that can be taken from the story of the rich young ruler. Today in Grow Group we are going to look at each one, and discuss how each of these “life lessons” apply to us.

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 10:17-31

- 1. Jesus will probe your life to expose any competing gods.**
 - What might indicate that there is a competing “god” in your life?
 - Read Matthew 6:24. What are some examples of competing “god’s” in our lives? What sort of other master’s might we have that compete with God?
- 2. Jesus provides a personal solution to remove any competing gods.**
 - What was the solution Jesus offered to the rich young ruler? Consider the examples of competing “gods” we just discussed; what solution might Jesus provide to remove some of these in our lives?
- 3. Jesus offers eternal life, but He won’t force you to follow Him.**
 - Why doesn’t God force anyone to accept His gift of eternal life? Why does He let us choose? Why is this better for us?
- 4. It’s impossible for a rich person (or poor one) to enter God’s kingdom (apart from Jesus).**
 - What’s the point Jesus is trying to make here? Why would it be impossible? Is it the riches that keep the young ruler from God’s Kingdom, or something else? Can we gain salvation on our own merit?
- 5. Eternal life can’t be earned or bought; it’s a gift from God.**
 - This life lesson reflects a key foundation of our faith. How would you explain it to an unbeliever? Why is this so critical?
 - Read Romans 6:23. How do we receive this gift?

We’ve discussed a lot, but what do you feel the Spirit is telling you today through Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler? Is there anything you think God wants you to change about your life? Do you feel empowered to make that change, or are you stuck feeling unable to make such a change? How can we pray for you about anything we’ve been discussing?



Grow Group Guide | zoom 11

Bible Discussion

Read Mark 10:32-45

- What stands out to you about the question James and John asked Jesus? Was it a strange question?
- Jesus did not outright dismiss James and John's request (v. 35), nor did He get ahead of it before they could ask (v. 37). Why might Jesus have let this play out as it did?
- Practically, what were James and John asking of Jesus in verse 37 when they asked if one could sit at His right, and the other at His left?
- In verse 38, Jesus told James and John that they didn't know what they were asking. If Jesus gave them what they wanted, it actually would not have been what they imagined or hoped for. What might James and John thought sitting at the right and left would involve? What was Jesus trying to tell them a life dedicated to Him would actually involve?
- In verses 41-45 Jesus contrasts the behavior of rulers of the Gentiles with what the behavior of Christ followers should be like. How are the two different? What does Jesus say should characterize the life of someone who follows Him?
- On Sunday, Pastor Ted referred to what Jesus describes in verses 43-45 as an 'upside down' kingdom. Does the world today make it difficult to abide by the upside-down kingdom commands of Jesus? What sometimes (or frequently) prevents us from following this command?
- Practically, what are some ways that we can serve or be a servant/slave to others?
- What characterizes true, genuine service? Is service what we do for Christ, or what we are to Christ? Is service doing things for Christ, or letting Christ do things through us?
- How does service to Christ require sacrifice? How does Christ stand as the ultimate example of a servant? What are some of the first examples or Bible stories that come to mind for you?

Go Deeper

Read 1 Peter 4:12-16

- How do these verses make you feel? Are they encouraging? Unsettling?
- Does the Bible instruct us to be ready **if** times of sacrifice and suffering come, or for **when** times of sacrifice and suffering come? Why does this distinction matter?
- How can we bring ourselves to rejoice in the sufferings of Christ? How can these verses work to prepare us for what Jesus tells us to expect?

Other verses from this week: John 15:18; Matthew 5:11-12; Philippians 2:5-8; Psalm 58:3; John 8:34; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 5:2;



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Bible Discussion

Read Mark 10:46-52

- Once Bartimaeus heard Jesus was in town and was passing by, he began to shout to Him. Why would he begin to shout after Jesus? What does this demonstrate or reflect about who he thought Jesus was and what he thought Jesus was capable of doing? Did he have any proof of what Jesus could do?
- What did Bartimaeus have to overcome to reach Jesus? Were the people in the crowd trying to help him get Jesus's attention? How did he respond to the crowd? Did he let them hinder or stop him?
- In verse 51, Jesus asks Bartimaeus "What do you want me to do for you?" Was this a strange question for Jesus to ask, especially since it was probably obvious Bartimaeus was blind? How does this compare to him asking James and John a few verses earlier "What do you want me to do for you?"
- Does anything stand out about Bartimaeus's response to Jesus (vs. 50-51), his actions and his words? What are some ways he demonstrates his faith in Jesus and his need through his response? If Jesus were to directly ask you "what do you want me to do for you?", how would you answer?
- In verse 52 Jesus said "...your faith has healed you." Taking a step back, what is faith? What does it mean to have faith? How did Bartimaeus demonstrate his faith?
- Looking at the interaction between Jesus and Bartimaeus another way, Jesus physically came near Bartimaeus, but didn't heal him until Bartimaeus asked to be healed. Does this matter? Does Jesus do the same with us--draw close, but then wait to be 'asked'?

Go Deeper

Read Matthew 15:14

- What kind of blindness is Jesus referring to in this verse?
- Is this kind of blindness more or less dangerous than physical blindness? Why?
- What are some ways we, or others, may be spiritually blind? (some examples from PT's sermon, if needed to kickstart thinking: blind to the truth about Jesus, blind about the God-given potential in others, blind to God's purpose for your life)

How do these spiritual blindnesses impact our faith, our walk with Christ, our testimony, or our interactions with others?

- Why does Satan want to keep us in blindness? How can we work to uncover our spiritual blindness, or help others uncover their spiritual blindness? How can we help to make Him known to those who are completely blind to Him?

Other verses from this week: Hebrews 11:6; 2 Corinthians 5:7